

# Things You Need To Know

## It's YOUR prescription

Eye doctors are required to give patients a copy of their eyeglass prescription after an exam, and most contact lens wearers can get a copy of their prescription after the eye exam or the contact lens fitting process.\*

## Filling expired prescriptions

An expired eyeglass prescription may be refilled only if your eyeglasses are lost, broken, or damaged beyond use. It is recommended that you return to the eye doctor for an exam, even if you don't think your prescription has changed.

## Additional fees for contact lens wearers

Some doctors charge an additional fee for a contact lens fitting and/or evaluation. Ask about fees and office policies before making an appointment.

## Your old eyeglasses

Bring old eyeglasses to the exam to see how they are working or to see if the lenses can be replaced with a new prescription. For most patients, it is important to have a back up pair of glasses. You can also donate your old glasses to charity.

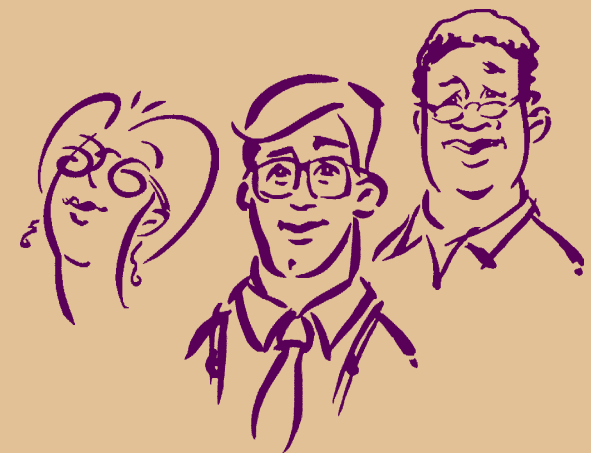
## Your medical records

You have the right to obtain a copy of your medical records from your eye doctor. Once you submit your request in writing, the information must be delivered within 15 days. The eye doctor may charge a fee to cover the cost of copying the documents.

*\* According to state law, prescriptions for certain specialty contacts, such as rigid gas permeable lenses, don't have to be released to the patient.*

## A Consumer Guide to Eye Care

# FOCUS ON YOUR EYES



Published by the  
CALIFORNIA BOARD OF OPTOMETRY

## Benefits of Regular Eye Exams

**A**n eye exam will likely include tests to determine if the patient needs corrective lenses, prescription eyeglasses or contact lenses. A comprehensive eye exam can include a check of the external and internal health of your eyes. Optometrists routinely screen for diseases such as glaucoma, cataracts, macular degeneration, hypertensive retinopathy, diabetic retinopathy, to name a few.

It is estimated that 40 to 45 percent of people diagnosed with diabetes will develop vision problems that could lead to blindness. These problems can sneak up on victims, developing with few warning signs and no pain. Glaucoma and other eye diseases may cause vision damage and eventual blindness without the victims being aware they have a problem.

Ideally, regular eye examinations by an eye care professional start early in life. It is recommended that children have their first comprehensive eye examination before they enter school. Children with undetected and untreated vision problems can suffer permanent damage to their vision later in life. Many children struggle in school because of vision problems. A comprehensive eye exam can determine if a child's eyesight is developing normally and identify a problem before it becomes more serious.



## Eye Care Providers – The Four O's

**Optometrists** are independent primary health care providers who conduct examinations to determine the overall health of the eyes. Optometrists screen for diseases such as glaucoma, cataracts, macular degeneration, hypertensive retinopathy, and diabetic retinopathy. They also prescribe corrective lenses when needed (i.e. glasses, contact lenses). Therapeutically certified optometrists prescribe medications to treat many eye diseases, (such as red eye, and conjunctivitis.) The Board of Optometry licenses and regulates these eye care professionals.

**Ophthalmologists** are eye surgeons who perform surgeries for cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration, etc. They can also treat eye diseases and prescribe corrective lenses. The Medical Board of California licenses these professionals. The Medical Board can be reached at 916/263-2424

**Opticians** run businesses that fill prescriptions for eyeglasses and contact lenses. Opticians cannot prescribe corrective lenses. They are also regulated by the Medical Board of California, which can be reached at 916/263-2424

**Optometric Assistants** prepare patients for their vision examinations by taking a patient's history and performing some of the more simple vision tests, including automated tests and those that take digital images of the eye. They may also fit prescription lenses and administer certain topical medications under the supervision of an optometrist or ophthalmologist. Optometric assistants are not licensed or regulated.

## Consumer Services Provided by the California Board of Optometry

**W**hen selecting an optometrist, contact the California Board of Optometry to make sure the person you selected holds an active license, and find out whether he/she has been formally disciplined by the Board.

You can check on your optometrist or request a complaint form by contacting the Board at:

**916/323-8720 or 800/547-4576**

You can also check licenses, file complaints online, or download a complaint form from the Board's Web site:

**[www.optometry.ca.gov](http://www.optometry.ca.gov)**

The Board is responsible for investigating complaints and disciplining optometrists who violate the law. All complaints against optometrists are taken seriously, and the Board is often able to mediate complaints and find solutions that satisfy all parties.

**C**omplaints involving more serious allegations are investigated for possible disciplinary action. Such complaints may include allegations of:

- Negligence, incompetence and unprofessional conduct
- Failure to provide appropriate medical care
- Dishonesty — including filing fraudulent insurance, Medicare or Medi-Cal claims
- Sexual misconduct
- Drug or alcohol abuse
- Conviction of certain crimes
- Unsanitary working conditions

If the allegations are proven true, the Board will take appropriate legal action, which could include license revocation, suspension, and/or probation.



### CALIFORNIA BOARD OF OPTOMETRY MISSION STATEMENT

*The mission of the California Board of Optometry is to assure that Californians have access to appropriate high quality eye and vision care and to implement and promote fair and just laws and regulations protecting the health and safety of consumers.*